

CHRONICLE AND COMMENT OF THE STAGE

Day of the Fantasy Seems To Be at Hand

By Heywood Brown

Realism is waning in the American theatre. The whole trend of our drama for the next few seasons will be toward fantasy. Of course, that is only our guess, but we are not making it blindly. Certain conditions in the theatre and in the world seem to foretell such a movement. It can hardly be said that realism in the theatre has spent itself, for it has never prevailed except to the most limited extent. The war is the factor which has turned people from any desire to look at things exactly as they are. Some of us who write reviews about the theatre have been inclined to scoff at certain war plays because they were not real, and yet everybody would run shrieking to the street if any producer came forward with a literal treatment of the conflict.

As a matter of fact, the most successful war play of them all very frankly disclaims any attempt to give a true picture of conditions. We think that the success of "The Better 'Ole" is largely due to the fact that it has dismissed all horrors and substituted songs and quips, and chorus girls. Bainsfather knows war, which is the very reason why he has carefully kept most of it out of his play.

But the case against realism does not end merely with the war play. Nobody can write about things as they are without being swept along by some intense conviction. The war has enlisted intense convictions and burned them up. It will take a good many years before anybody can feel as strongly about anything as he did about the war. Even the league of nations, although it has set plenty of bitterness loose among political leaders, has aroused no enormous partisanship among the general public in this country.

Perhaps it will be a good thing for the dramatist to lay aside realism for a time. It is a mood which requires not only an immense conviction, but fair-mindedness as well, and logic. Now, as a matter of fact, there is hardly enough fair-mindedness in the world today to polish a thimble top and the stock of logic is hardly as generous. It seems to us, for instance, that anybody who wishes to oppose the league of nations has only to read the speeches of the men who are against the league.

Realism in the theatre is difficult enough under the best conditions, so there can be no possible harm in letting it bide its time until the eyes of the world are a bit less bloodshot. Fortunately, the abandonment of realism does not mean the desertion of truth. A fantastic play which bears no direct relation whatever to life may very well be more true than a play which is something like life, but not quite. Most of our plays fall into this neutral ground. They have neither the truth of reality nor the truth of sheer imagination. It seems to us that "Peter Pan" is a truer play than "The Lion and the Mouse" for the reason that it tells no deliberate lies, at any rate. It doesn't say this is life and then palm off a big scene. The whole attitude of "Peter Pan," from the beginning, is to convince its audiences that the thing with which it deals isn't life at all. Plays of this sort have one enormous advantage over the realistic or the semi-realistic drama. Some of us know what life is, but nobody, unless it be Barrie, is familiar with that state of existence which we have clumsily designated as not-life.

It isn't necessary to invade fairyland in order to provide plays which approximate the fantastic. There are countries on the map which are sufficiently unfamiliar to give no suggestion of reality to American audiences. A Japanese play, for instance, might be almost photographic, and yet in a Broadway theatre it would have all the effect of a piece of detached imagination. Again, a fertile field of fantasy can be reached by turning back to times which are gone or times which are to come. It is probable that we will have a number of plays concerning life after death. A few seasons ago death, or anything pertaining to it, was not a popular theatrical theme, but at that time there wasn't much death. Now it cannot be ignored. Playwrights might as well face it, or, better yet, look behind it.

Still another field for the writer who wishes to deal with things imaginatively lies in dreams. It would seem

inevitable that there should be more dream plays now that Freud has pointed out the relation of the dream to life, but the field has scarcely been touched. With the exception of "Suppressed Desires," by Susan Glaspell and George Cram Cook, we know of no American play which deals with dreams in their relation to life. "Suppressed Desires" was a farce, and there is still free opportunity for all who wish to deal more seriously with the subject. It seems to us that there should be at least one good mystery play with a murder or something of the sort which is cleared up by the interpretation of a dream.

In suggesting a theatrical drive into fantasy we are not predicting for a moment any tendency on the part of the public to turn to the pale pink and gray poetic play which rears its head now and again in the little theatres. Verse will not kill a good play, but it most certainly will not make a bad one. Unfortunately, there are a certain number of playwrights who seem to believe that there is some game law which protects poets. When they push a frail flier out of the nest they seem to take the attitude: "Of course, there isn't much sense or plot or interest to this little thing of mine, but after all it is poetry."

That is not enough. When somebody writes a play in verse with a good story and good characterization, and it is produced by some man who will forbid the players to strike attitudes and rant, that play will be a success. Nobody will hold the verse against it. Perhaps they won't even notice that it is verse. And, by the way, we forgot to suggest that it should not be played in a dim green light.

Just as the public has no instinctive aversion to poetry, it has none against magic, enchantment, witchcraft and such like. And yet a few seasons ago no manager who had a finger on the public pulse would produce such a play. Now it is evident that a little magic is the very best thing for a melodrama. "Eyes of Youth" would have been dull enough without its bit of crystal gazing. "The Unknown Purple," which is certainly among the most successful melodramas of the season, goes much further and asks the audience to accept the fact that a man can render himself invisible. It is true that this is done on pseudo-scientific grounds, but the distinction between the pseudo-scientific and the magical is a hairline. As a matter of fact an audience will gladly concede an author just as much enchantment or magic as he may require if only he will use it to the good purpose of spinning them an engaging story. It seems to us that never before have audiences been so intent on a story before all else. Perhaps the movie influence has something to do with it. Since this demand must be satisfied, we think it no more than fair that playwrights should be allowed to rub a lamp now and again and to ask the slave of the lamp when he appears to furnish them with a story.

At the One-Week Houses

STANDARD—The premiere of a new musical comedy, entitled "Frocks and Frills," will be this week's event.

SHUBERT-RIVERA—"Little Simplicity" is the attraction here.

LOEW'S SEVENTH AVENUE—Walker Whiteside and Tyrone Power in "The Little Brother" come here direct from the Belmont Theatre.

BRONX OPERA HOUSE—John Cort's musical comedy, "Flo-Plo," will be presented here this week.

Brooklyn

MAJESTIC—Mary Nash in "The Big Chance" is this week's event.

MONTAUK—"Going Up," the Cohen and Harris musical comedy success, comes to this theatre.

Mrs. Fiske to Play for Men in Uniform To-night

Under the auspices of the Stage Women's War Relief, Mrs. Fiske and her company will give a special performance of "Miss Nelly of N'Orleans" at the Henry Miller Theatre to-night for men in uniform. The entire orchestra will be reserved for wounded men until 7 o'clock.

Patriotic Revue at Columbia This Week

"Cheer Up America," a patriotic revue in two acts and ten scenes, is this week's attraction at the Columbia Theatre. It was written by Will H. Smith, producer of "Yip, Yip, Yaphank" show of pleasant memory. The original music is by Nat Osborn.

BROOKLYN ADVERTISEMENTS

MONTAUK

Only Engagement in Brooklyn
COHAN & HARRIS Present
The Aviation Musical
Comedy Success

GOING UP

One Year at the Liberty Theatre
AUGMENTED ORCHESTRA
FLORENCE NASH
in REMNANT
March 11—LEO DITRICHEIN

WEEK OF MARCH 11
Next Week
LITTLE SIMPLICITY



Helen Holmes in "Keep It to Yourself" Marie Vernon in "A Prince There Was"

A Flourishing Community Theatre in New York

At the Eltinge Theatre next Sunday night, when Yvette Guilbert gives a single performance of "Guibour" for the benefit of the Henry Street Settlement, Broadway, cynical of any but its own harsh lights, will have the opportunity of judging the amazing results of a unique theatre arts and crafts movement. Instead of the sleazy, daubly effects, which seem inseparable from "artistic" efforts, it will see a production so substantial, complete and beautiful that it will doubtless naively wonder how it came into being so far from the beaten trade routes as the eastern end of Grand Street.

A weight of condensation will follow the admission that this production is the work of amateurs, since it is a trade conspiracy everywhere to point out to the inefficiency of the amateur, never his freshness and disinterestedness. But, perhaps, the sober finish of this production will speak for the effectiveness of the amateur, under a scheme so simple and rational as that in use at the Neighborhood Playhouse, and in a field where freshness and disinterestedness are so much to be desired. Under the roof which covers the theatre have grown workshops of all the arts and crafts which serve it. There are classes for the draughting of scenery to scale for design, the building and painting of it, the making of properties and costumes, the dyeing and designing of cloths all under skilled supervision. The workers in these shops are amateurs, who pay a

small sum for their courses and who gain practical experience from their work on the Neighborhood productions. It is, in a softened fashion, an apprenticeship.

Seen from the front, "Guibour" has a solidity and loveliness that sets a calculating one to figuring. These medieval costumes, from costume plates by Robert E. Jones, have been executed without stint. The virgin and angels in heavy cloth of gold, the strangely worked and medallioned cloths, the sumptuous and heavy fabrics of gold and scarlet and rich purples and greens—they have an authenticity that greatly adorns the production. There is no shabby detail in this spacious and richly set scene.

How much of the chemistry of illusion is wrought in the little workshops which honeycomb the building is disclosed by a visit to them. The cloth of gold costumes which hang from the figures of the saints in such metallic folds are made of oilcloth, plain table oilcloth, gilded. Up in the workshop of applied designs they spent a long time looking for the effect and then finally hit it. A green chiffon brocade in gold, turns out to be green chiffon cleverly stencilled. The magnificent scarlet which lines the flowing sleeves of a robe worn by Guibour's husband is just plebeian cotton flannel. The judge's medallioned robe is made of black cotton flannel, with applied medallions of silvered cloth.

AMUSEMENTS

Mat. Daily at 2 25, 50, 75c. EVERY NIGHT 25, 50, 75c. \$1.50. 2,000 CHOICE SEATS, 50c. 1,000 ORCH. SEATS, \$1.00. Except Sat., Sun. and Holidays.

WILLIAM ROCK & WHITE FRANCES

In the Favorite Numbers of Their Amazingly Entertaining Repertoire, including Song-Dance-Drama—Prize-winning—Chatter—Burlesque—Rock and White are the phenomena of show business; they break all box office records; they upset all predictions for popularity and success; they have one objective—entertainment—and they achieve it with rare success.

THIS TREMENDOUS TIP-TOP TEAM

Made Their First Great Hit Together at the Palace, and They Will Make Their Last Appearance on Broadway at the Palace Before Going to England to Be Starred in a Revue of Imperial Splendor.

A REALLY EXTRAORDINARY FEATURE

America's Fighting Bandmen—Musicians Who Play With Yankee Battle Pep.

U. S. NAVY JAZZ BAND

23—Enlisted Men—All Crack Musicians—Biggest and Best Jazz Band in the World—Just returned from France, where they played for President Wilson in France.

THE SWEETEST DIFFERENT SINGERS

After Serving With A. B. F. in France, Welcome Return to Vaudeville.

EXTRA ADDED ATTRACTION

WELCOME TO OUR HEROES. YIP, YIP, YAPHANKERS. BEN BEYER & CO. MARIE NORDSTROM. In "BITE OF ACTING," by Frances Nordstrom.

AMUSEMENTS

NEW YORK'S LEADING THEATRES AND SUCCESSES

EMPIRE 11th Ave. and 49th St. Eves. 8:20. Matinees Wed. and Sat. 2:30. Thurs. & Sat. at 2:10. CHARLES FROHMAN presents **WILLIAM GILLETTE** "IMBARRAS BEST COMEDY" **DEAR BRUTUS** "To have this little play in New York is indeed good fortune."—Eve. Sun. MATINEES WEDNESDAY & SATURDAY.

GLOBE MON. MAR. 17 **OTIS SKINNER** In the 4-Act Play after Balzac **THE HONOR OF THE FAMILY**

KNICKERBOCKER 11th Ave. and 49th St. Eves. 8:20. Matinees Wed. and Sat. 2:30. Thurs. & Sat. at 2:10. JOHNSON presents **JOHN CORT'S** **NEWEST MUSICAL COMEDY**

LISTEN FLESTER By Harry L. Carr & George E. Stoddard. Music by Harold Ord. With The Daintiest Traveling Chorus Ever Seen on Broadway.

COHAN & HARRIS' 4 BIG HITS **COHAN & HARRIS THEATRE** Eves. 8:15. Matinees Wed. & Sat. 2:15. **BIGGEST SUCCESS SINCE "THE MERRY WIDOW"**

THE ROYAL VAGABOND A COHANIZED OPERA COMIQUE Music by J. A. Armand. Book by J. A. Armand. Lyrics by J. A. Armand.

HENRY MILLER'S THEATRE 124 W. 43rd St. Eves. 8:30. Matinees Thurs. & Sat. 2:30. **MRS. FISKE** in a comedy of moonshine madness and make believe **Mis Nelly of N'Orleans** By LAURENCE GORE Under the Direction of Harrison Gray Fiske

LONGAGRE 143 W. 43rd St. Eves. 8:30. Matinees Wed. & Sat. 2:30. **THE MOST FASCINATING MYSTERY PLAY EVER WRITTEN** **THREE FACES EAST** BY ANTHONY PAUL KELLY EMETT CORRIGAN & VIOLET HEYING

STUART WALKER PRESENTS **The Book of Job** AND LORD OUNSAVY'S **THE TENTS OF THE ARABS** **PUNCH & JUDY** ADAPTED FROM THE ORIGINAL BY J. A. ARMAND. Eves. 8:30. Matinees Thurs. & Sat. 2:30.

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Lyceum 49th St. and Broadway. Eves. 8:20. Matinees Wed. & Sat. 2:30. Thurs. & Sat. at 2:10. **DAVID BELASCO** presents **DADDIES**

"THE CANARY" "IT'S A BIRD" AT THE GLOBE **LAST WEEK** Combination of Dillingham Musical Comedy Stars **SANDERSON CATHORN** Sam Hardy, Doyle & Maud Dixon, Hardy, Doyle & Maud Dixon, Hardy, Doyle & Maud Dixon. "Harriest, Sharpest, Chorus on Broadway"

MON. MAR. 17 **OTIS SKINNER** In the 4-Act Play after Balzac **THE HONOR OF THE FAMILY**

LIBERTY THEATRE 42nd St. Eves. 8:20. Matinees Wed. & Sat. 2:30. Thurs. & Sat. at 2:10. **LAST WEEK** AT THIS THEATRE **M. LEO DITRICHEIN** IN HIS GREATEST TRIUMPH **THE MARQUIS DE PRIOLA**

LIBERTY THEATRE SPECIAL Monday Night, March 17 **HENRY MILLER** **BLANCHE BATES** **HOLBROOK BLINN** **ESTELLE WINWOOD** and a distinguished company in **"MOLIÈRE"** A PLAY BY LOUIS MOELLER.

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NEW AMSTERDAM THEATRE 142nd St. Eves. 8:20. Matinees Wed. & Sat. 2:30. Thurs. & Sat. at 2:10. **BEST OF ALL LAUGHING MUSICAL SHOWS** **THE Musical Hilarity** **VELVET LADY** Music by Victor Herbert Book by Fred Jackson Adaptation & Lyrics by Henry Blossom

THE SMOOTHEST GIRL CHORUS THAT EVER CAME TO TOWN **ZIEGFELD 9 O'CLOCK REVUE** **MIDNIGHT FROLIC**

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